

over
Theology vol 38
FREE THOUGHTS

U P O N

The DOCTRINES of ELECTION,

F A L L of M A N,

A N D

RESTORATION by *CHRIST*.

I N W H I C H

The principal OBJECTIONS are answer'd against
CHRIST the Propitiation for SIN.

The SECOND EDITION.

Wherein what has been advanc'd against the *first Edition*
is answer'd.

To which is added,

A LETTER inserted in the *London Courant* of Feb. 26.
1747. With Remarks on what Mr. *Finch* has ad-
vanc'd against it.

By *WILLIAM CUDWORTH*. *K*

L O N D O N :

Printed by J. HART, and Sold at the Pamphlet-Shops in
London and Westminster.

MDCCLVII.

[Price Six-pence.]





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U P O N

The DOCTRINES of ELECTION,

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A N D

RESTORATION by *CHRIST*.

HAVING observ'd much contention of late, in the points of *election*, the *fall of man*, and *restoration by Christ*, between the *Calvinists*, on one hand, and those call'd *Arians*, &c. on the other; and conceiving that in some respects there is *truth* and *error* mix'd on both sides, I take the liberty of presenting to the *publick*, some FREE THOUGHTS upon the subjects; humbly presuming they will be acceptable to *those*, who are not byass'd by any *particular party*. I hope, therefore, such as are of

this mind, will give me a candid hearing, excuse my weakness in any thing offer'd, and where they see me evidently wrong, in a friendly manner set me to rights. I assure them I should take it quite kind, and should be very glad to see the *truth* set in a clearer light, tho' thereby I am demonstrated in any thing to be mistaken. Thus having made my *apology*, without taking up more of your time, I shall address myself to the *subject*.

WHATEVER God brings to pass, he no doubt brings it to pass according to his *purpose*, according to the counsel of his own *will*; by which *purpose* or *will*, we are not to understand something that is caus'd, but a will eternal, uncaus'd, and immutable.

NEITHER are we to understand a *mere will*, destitute of, or unaccompanied with *wisdom*, because that is only an abstracted idea of will, form'd in our own minds, and not such a will as has any real existence in God; but as his will is eternal, without cause, so also it is accompanied with eternal uncreated wisdom and goodness. As far as this eternal wisdom and goodness is discover'd to us by the revelation he has made of himself in his *word* and *works*, so far it belongs to us to be acquainted with it, that we may render to him *due praise*; as far as any thing is ascribed to him evidently repugnant to wisdom and goodness, such as contriving out of *mere will* his creatures misery, condemning innocent souls to eternal torments, and passing by such piercing objects of pity, regardless of their misery, so far we may confidently assert his proceedings not understood, and falsely represented. But as far both in creation, providence, and government of the world, as his proceedings are mysterious and hidden, it becomes us to be silent and find no fault, but to submit implicitly
to

to his proceedings, and still maintain and vindicate his character as *wise, holy, just, and good*, it being unreasonable for us, (who are unable to comprehend either what God is, or how it becomes him to act agreeable to his own *perfections*, and agreeable to the relation he stands in to us, as creator, lord, and governor of the whole) to bring his actions to the bar of our judgment, because, unless we knew all things as he does, we are incapable of being judges. For, as one well observes, ‘ If the fitness of God’s acting in this or that manner, is founded in his *fore-knowledge* of every thing that would *happen*, from *every possible way* of acting, then it is just as absolutely impossible for us to know the reasons on which the fitness of his actions are founded, as it is impossible for us to be omniscient.’

WHEN we read, therefore, in the scriptures, of God’s *elect*, his having chosen some in *Christ Jesus* to salvation before the world was, &c. and of others, who were of old ordain’d to condemnation, we have no *just foundation* to understand the determination of a *mere will*, without *wisdom* and *goodness*, which represents something very *unworthy* of God, and evidently repugnant to him, but rather from the perfections of his nature, we have reason to conceive by *elect* and *reprobate*, such persons, who (setting aside all consideration of *foreknowledge* or *decree*) would, according to the most holy, just, wise, and gracious, as well as sovereign, proceedings of God, be made partakers of those *different states*; for as his goodness and wisdom are as *eternal* as his purpose and decree, and all things which have been, are now, or shall be, were ever present before him, or in his mind; so there has been nothing determin’d from eternity, but would become the perfections of God to determine now, could we suppose it unde-

termin'd. We should not, therefore, charge any thing upon God's *purpose* and *counsel*, which we would not charge upon his *present proceedings*; and as I mention'd before, where we understand them, it becomes us to *praise* and *vindicate* him, and where we do not, it becomes us to be *silent* and implicitly to believe he will do nothing *unworthy* of himself; tho' he must be supposed to act according to reasons as much above our comprehension, as his wisdom is beyond ours.

THE right understanding of the doctrine of *election* and *reprobation*, is pretty much dependent on the doctrine of *man's liberty*, and in that respect it is allow'd by the *Westminster* divines in their *confession*, That, " God is not the author of sin, that
 " violence is not offer'd to the will of the creatures,
 " and that the liberty and contingency of second
 " causes is not hereby taken away, but rather
 " established."

It is allow'd by Mr. *Gill*, * that " Man is a free
 " agent, and has a natural liberty of the will, and
 " that whatever concern the decree of God has in
 " the sins of men, it does not necessitate or force
 " them to do them, it does not at all infringe the
 " freedom of their will, or destroy their free
 " agency."†

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* Answer to the *Birmingham* dialogue writer, p. 30.

† Mr. *Gill* indeed makes a distinction in other places between a natural, and moral or spiritual *liberty* of will, but to this I would observe, that if a man is *really* endow'd with *liberty of will*, or is his *own abuser*, the different objects propos'd to him, do not at all alter or destroy this *liberty*, but he enjoys it as much in *moral* or *spiritual* things, when propos'd and made known to him, as in any thing else. There is no reason therefore to suppose, that God in the faith, conversion, and salvation of his people, does destroy, prevent, or work without, but rather makes use of that *liberty* he has already given them.

FURTHER, says he, in another place, " God
 " foreknew that *Adam* would fall, as *Christ* did that
 " *Judas* would betray him, for he told him of it
 " before-hand, and yet God was no more the au-
 " thor of the sin and fall of *Adam*, than *Christ* was
 " of his betraying by *Judas*, nor did either *Adam*,
 " or *Judas*, feel any force or constraint from this
 " fore-knowledge, obliging them to sin, nor do
 " they ever complain of it, or impute their sin and
 " fall unto it. Prescience thus stated, introduces
 " no fatal necessity; it is indeed attended with a
 " necessity of infallibility, respecting the event,
 " but not with a co-active necessity upon the wills
 " of men, which are hereby left entirely free, and so
 " they find themselves in the commission of every ac-
 " tion, neither the decree of God, nor his fore-know-
 " ledge, necessitate men, oblige, or compel them
 " to do the things decreed and foreknown." ||

AND indeed was not this allow'd, was not man
 his *own determiner*, was he not at liberty to *chuse* or
refuse, notwithstanding the strongest motives or ar-
 guments from within or without, was he necessarily
 influenced to his choice by any imperceptible byas,
 or internal necessity, he could not be reckon'd blame-
 worthy, because he is not left to his choice, or ra-
 ther has no choice of his own, more than any *pas-*
sive instrument which is made use of either to do
good or *evil*.

BUT as the most sober and judicious assertors of
 the doctrine of *election* and *reprobation* have allow'd
 men this *liberty*, I shall say no more of it, but con-
 sider what remains in this *view*.

|| Cause of God and truth, vol. III. p. 252, 253.

It is most true, that God's counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure ; and agreeable hereunto, God has immutably will'd and ordain'd the *natural freedom* of man, as he has his *being* ; he has also revealed his will, how man being thus constituted, should *use* that freedom to his own happiness, the good of others, and God's glory, which right use of *natural freedom*, is a thing in the very nature of it left to be executed by man ; and as man is immutably ordain'd a *free being*, he is as such immutably capable of resisting the will of God in this respect, and herein consists the possibility and nature of sin.

BUT it is not to be inferr'd, therefore, that any further degree of good that God is pleas'd to bestow upon his creature, in the *right use* of their *natural liberty*, is *merited* by the creature, but every good and perfect gift cometh from above, unmerited, uncaus'd by any thing but his sovereign *good pleasure* ; for when a man has acted according to the will of God, in a right use of his natural liberty, he is to be consider'd as having done no more than he ought to do, according to his present constitution, and cannot lay claim to a moment's future existence on account of what he has done ; much less any *better state* of existence than he has at present ; and therefore whatever *good* man enjoys, he enjoys it freely by God's grace, and in any farther conferment of good upon him, the right use of his liberty, is only made use of by the will of God, as an instrument of conveyance of this good upon him.

NEITHER is it to be supposed, therefore, that any determination of his creatures, shall be able in any period of time to disappoint him of his elect, frustrate his counsel, alter his mind, or make him
change

change his purpose, and take a new course; for each distinct moment of time, and each circumstance in every moment, has not only been beheld of God in his eternal wisdom and infinite knowledge, but also the management thereof, hath its *distinct* reference to God's eternal will and decree, and no doubt he has eternally and unchangeably will'd what is best and fittest to be done by him in every moment of time; and according to this, as he purpos'd to endow man with the liberty above-mention'd, he has also purpos'd to govern his creature man, and over-rule those evils which he perceiv'd would arise from the *wrong use* of their liberty, as also the management of the various states, conditions, tempers and actions of free agents, and the various effects of his proceedings, in such a manner as should appear to be best upon the whole, most for the good of the creature, and for his own glory.

AND in this view of things, it may be allow'd, that God hath ordained whatsoever comes to pass, inasmuch as he hath chosen that *plan*, in which he foresaw those evils would arise, and hath determin'd his own conduct thereupon, in saving by *Christ*, in restraining, over-ruling, rewarding, and punishing, in the most wise, and suitable manner, without infringing or offering violence to the liberty or will of the creatures, or taking away the liberty and contingency of second causes, or determining any one to damnation, but in view of their absolutely free, and voluntarily *rejection* of him, and *rebellion* against him; or dealing in any case otherwise than one who is no respecter of persons. So that the will of the creature, doth in no wise alter his purpose or counsel, because his purpose and counsel is in view of the creatures exercising the liberty he has given them, and notwithstanding their *use* or *abuse* of it, his purpose

pose stands, and he doth all his pleasure, and remains in one mind, and none can turn him. For all that he has determin'd, and all that he has promised, is determin'd and promised in view of the event and success of his own wise and fit methods of proceeding, not only in respect of his own actions, but in turning even the wickedness and evil of man's purpose to accomplish the good of his own.

THUS, tho' the scripture declares, God would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, yet as he sees it not fit to save them but as consistent with all his perfections, and also with the use of that liberty he has given them, he has likewise declared, that he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.

I WOULD farther remark, that as this liberty of man is the *gift* of God, according to the good pleasure of his will; and as the right use of this liberty is made but instrumental to bring about his purpose and grace in the most suitable manner, there is no more merit or ground of boasting in man, in his being saved according to it, than if he was a most necessary agent; tho' at the same time the abuse of it in vicious and wrong choice, is justly condemnable; and the necessity of our being our own determiners, in this case appears plainly, if we consider, that if that wherein our salvation consists, was not a matter of choice, it could not be salvation to us, and there is no such thing as being saved against our will.

BUT here some may object, that the scripture saith, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy, and that he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardneth.

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To which I answer, those scriptures are not given to teach us, that man is made use of in a way contrary to his nature, like a mere machine, or that God's will and pleasure is destitute of wisdom, goodness, justice, &c. but they convey to us, that the favour and mercy of God, shewn to the sons of men, is from *sovereign goodness*, and is absolutely undeserv'd, and belongs neither to him that *willeth*, nor him that *runneth*, and that the executing judgments, and the disposal of every event, is to be left to his sovereign will and wisdom, to order all things for the *greatest good*, as he sees fit, without our replying against him, or asking wherefore he has done so. For he is such a *potter*, as knows how to make a right use of the power he has over his clay, as knows the reasons why he makes one vessel to *honour*, and another to *dishonour*, and for us short-sighted creatures to ascribe it either to *merit* in us, or *mere will* in him, because in many instances we cannot discover the reasons of his proceedings, is a very groundless supposition.

It may perhaps be thought by some to be the same thing, if God has created beings that he fore-knew *would* be damn'd, as tho' he created them on *purpose* to be damn'd. I would therefore endeavour to remove this difficulty, by observing, that he knew it by a fore-knowledge of all things in their future existence, according to such a certainty of the event, as would be the same, tho' there was no such knowledge, whereby he knew his own wise and fit proceedings, in creating and governing them, as unalterably certain as every other event; therefore this kind of fore-knowledge can't be suppos'd to influence him to hinder or alter his own wise and fit proceedings, or the event that would come to pass. For that would suppose the prevention of that which
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is decreed to be permitted, and of those proceedings which he has already determin'd. as wisest and best; and to say God foreknew only as a necessary consequence of his disposal of things, by a fore-knowledge of causes, producing their necessary effects, as a man that has laid a *mine*, knows when and how it will blow up, would be to make man a necessary agent, and God the author of sin; or more properly to make it no sin at all. But the truth is, God foreknew these things, not as what must be by necessary cause, but as what would be upon the best disposal of things that could be.

HENCE it appears, that as we may conceive of a certainty of the event, independent of any decree, the certainty of the event implies no such thing, and as there is no occasion to make the sins of men otherwise dependent on the decree of God, than by such a certainty of the event, as God foreknew would be in that plan of creation and government, which he wisely and graciously chose; so also his executing just judgments as the wages of sin, and rewarding according to their deeds, all those who have not fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them, is no otherwise to be ascribed to the decree of God, than as in foresight of those offences, which bring those just judgments upon them; and the consideration that he over-rules the just judgments he executes, and the rebellion and opposition of such impenitent ones, for the good of others, and his own glory, may solve the cases of *Pharaoh*, and others we find in scripture, without having recourse to a *fatal necessity* of all actions, or understanding them in such a manner, as makes God in any case the *author of sin*.

As to the doctrine of the *fall*, and *original sin*, it must be confess'd, that to treat of it in such a manner

manner as represents God designing evil against our first parents, or any of his posterity, is to misrepresent him ; but as I conceive it cannot be proved by the scripture account we have of it, that he was in any case the *author* of the sin and fall, or that his acting thereupon, has not been in greatest compassion, wisdom, and goodness, consistent also with the strictest justice, it is to be vindicated as a doctrine of truth, reveal'd in his word.

WHERE we plainly see, that any description of God's proceedings, is absolutely inconsistent with wisdom and justice, &c. we may justly reject it as as misrepresentation of things, because it represents God as acting *unworthy* of himself, and the scriptures themselves must be always understood in a sense consistent with these perfections, because we cannot have greater assurance of any thing than that God is wise, holy, just, and good, neither can we depend upon his word, unless we thus honourably conceive of him.

BUT then it must be also remember'd, that when we are not able to demonstrate any description of God's proceedings to be absolutely inconsistent with the divine perfections, we are incapable of denying any description thereof laid down to us, because that method of acting, which appears probably the most wise and fit to our finite comprehensions, may appear to infinite wisdom most absurd and inconvenient ; since the case stands thus, it is most reasonable for us to submit to that description of things we have in his word.

IT must, I think, be allow'd, that a creature cannot possibly be endued with such perfections, as to render them independant and self-sufficient, tho' they
may

may be said to be VERY GOOD, when they answer the design for which they were created ; and creatures of such limited perfections, endued with *liberty of choice*, are capable of sinning, (tho' not under a necessity of it) because capable of chusing contrary to the will of their creator, and breaking his commands.

It must also, I conceive, be allow'd, that the wise and good creator, and disposer of all things, has a sovereign right, without our calling his wisdom to our bar, to dispose to every rank of beings their due proportion of perfection, for the state wherein he has design'd them, and none have reason to complain, unless they are (without their own default) in a worse estate than not being at all; and tho' upon the fall, God has seen fit to bring *Adam's* posterity into the same fallen state and condition with their first parents, yet if (all things consider'd) they are not thereby become worse than not to be at all, there is no just ground of complaint from their being so dispos'd of.

ADAM seems according to the scripture account, to have been a creature adapted to the immediate care and direction of his maker, (tho' endued with those perfections and excellencies, which render'd him fit to be the lord and governor over this lower part of the creation) and while he kept innocent, and could be satisfy'd with thus being under God's immediate care and direction, he was immortal, having access to the *tree of life*, that would preserve him so, and was fully supply'd from all inconveniency and want, that he knew not so much as that he was naked, not being sensible of shame or cold, much less did he find his weakness in any other respect.

IF it be ask'd, whether it was a blessing to be ignorant of his own weakness? I answer, yes; while he was under such immediate supply, care, and protection of God, it would only be a useless piece of knowledge to him, and have a tendency to make him be sinfully careful of himself, and leave his dependance on his maker; for, is it not a blessing to a child (whose deficiency is supply'd by the care of the parent) that it is not sensible of its weakness; how unhappy would it be if it were not so!

THIS I apprehend was one reason why he was forbid to eat of the tree of knowledge of *good* and *evil*, because such knowledge, as he would obtain by eating of that tree, would be not only useless, but exceeding hurtful, filling him with that selfish carefulness, as would incline him to leave his dependance upon God, and be productive of all those evils which have come to pass, and whereby he became a vessel marred from his proper use in the hands of his maker.

THIS also was a sufficient reason for annexing the penalty of death to the eating of that tree, not only to deter him by the threatening from a thing so entirely unprofitable and hurtful to him, but also in case he fell from his innocence, to prevent his living for ever, which would only be a weapon in his hands to make him the greater enemy, and further from a reconciliation with God.

UPON the *fall*, man becomes again, as it were, the subject of divine consideration and wisdom; and the proper disposal of *Adam's* posterity, and all this lower part of the creation, upon this event, is a matter that we are no more capable to judge of than the creation and disposal of things at first: Who
hath

hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? who but himself can tell what is the fittest method to promote the *greatest good* on this occasion? We ought therefore not to persist in the sin of our first parent, and lean to our own understanding, but acquiesce in that disposal of things thereupon, which the word of God declares to us, and our own experience confirms.

As the evil effects which eating the *forbidden fruit* brought immediately upon our first parent, sufficiently vindicates God in his forbidding it in such a manner as he did, and shews his design therein to be tender and kind; so if these evil effects would also become hereditary to his posterity, it is a very sufficient reason for bringing all his posterity into the same condition with himself, and more especially as his judgments in this case are *medicinal*, and in view of a *restoration*.

HENCE we see it was *Adam*, not God, that brought this evil upon himself, and in consequence upon his posterity, for as his children would be all now like him, every one turning to their own way, and all taking care for themselves, it was needful to cut him and them off from all those advantages in that first estate man was placed in, that prove a hurt to their restoration.

BESIDES, if it was needful to guard the tree of life with a *threatning* and *curse*, it is fit that threatening and curse be executed, and if God's mercy and compassion appear in this case; it must not be expected to be by falsifying his word in not executing sentence, but by providing a way of escape in the *seed of the woman*, who should bruise the serpent's head.

I APPREHEND that *as Levi* may be said to pay tithes in the loins of *Abraham*, so we may be said to have all sinned and fell in the loins of *Adam*, and both *scripture* and *experience* let us know, that every son of *Adam* is born in the likeness of his *first parent*, as consider'd in his fallen condition: Was this dispensation consider'd only by itself, we might be tempted to think with some, that it was an arbitrary display of *mere sovereign pleasure*, but as I view it connected with a *promise* that the *seed of the woman* should bruise the *head of the serpent*, by becoming a *propitiation thro' faith* in his *blood*, and looking upon this promise as *equally* belonging to the *world*, and this SAVIOUR *absolutely free* for the appropriation of *every creature*, I cannot but say with the apostle, *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.*

IF we would form just and honourable conceptions of God's proceedings, we must not consider such of them, as display his *justice*, independent and separate from those which display his *mercy*, nor his *mercy* from his *justice*, nor both from his *wisdom*; but we are to consider them as the dispensations of all perfection *united*: And I conceive, an *honest mind*, not disposed to cavil, and find fault with God's proceedings, will collect those circumstances which discover his goodness and mercy, to ballance with his justice, or with what to a partial and imperfect view of things, might appear merely *arbitrary*.

I CONCEIVE it is because he is *equally good* to the whole, that he acts as he does by the whole, and also with each particular part; and thus I conceive it becomes us to think of the *divine being*, not only in

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respect

respect to those things I can account for, but even in all such circumstances or proceedings I cannot. And for us short-sighted creatures to consider one dispensation which displays *sovereignty*, or *justice*, without harmonizing it with those which display his *wisdom* and *goodness*, is acting very unwarrantably, not according to the truth of things, and no wonder such presumptuous mortals, from these imperfect views, charge God foolishly, and count his proceedings *evil, false, treacherous, &c.*

As all the *human species* were originally contain'd in *Adam*, as in their *common parent*, I can see no unfitness in their being put to a *trial* in him, as he was as well, if not better qualify'd, as to his person and circumstances, than any of his posterity could be supposed to be; and it appears to me much better to be tried in *Adam*, and upon his failure to have instantly provided such a blessed *common salvation* as we have in *Christ Jesus*, and thus have the evil of the *fall* render'd the means of a *greater good*, than to be as independent of *Adam* or *Christ Jesus*, as some would *suppose* themselves to be.

EVERY government is supposed to have *wisdom* sufficient to see what is meet in respect to the administration of both *justice* and *mercy*; and as this is allow'd to the governments of men, it cannot surely be disown'd in respect to God's, of which we are so abundantly less capable of being judges.

I COME in the next place to consider the *remedy* that God has in his great mercy and love provided for our *salvation* and *recovery*; and that, according to the *scripture account*, is, that the Lord laid our help upon one that is mighty, *Psal. xviii.*
19. who his own self bare our sins in his own body
on

on the tree, 1 *Pet.* ii. 24. who was deliver'd for our offences, to finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness, *Dan.* ix. 24. and was rais'd again for our justification, *Rom.* iv. 25. having been made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 *Cor.* v. 21. that as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one should many be made righteous, *Rom.* v. 19. that this wonderful person is no less than God manifest in flesh, 1 *Tim.* iii. 16. to take away our sins, 1 *John* iii. 5. who comes into the world as a child born unto us, and as a son given unto us, notwithstanding he is at the same time the mighty God, the everlasting father, *Is.* ix. 6. And herein God declares his righteousness in remission of sin, by setting forth *Jesus* as a propitiation thro' faith in his blood, and appears just, and at the same time the justifier of him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, *Rom.* iii. 25, 26. iv. 6. herein also the love and mercy of God appears, in that God spared not his own son, but freely deliver'd him up for us all, *Rom.* viii. as the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, *John* i. 29. in that he so loved the world of ungodly sinners, his enemies, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him (or trusteth on his righteousness, as perform'd for, and given to them) should not perish, but have everlasting life, *John* iii. 16.

As this doctrine of *salvation by Christ alone*, as the *propitiation for sin*, is thus plainly held forth in *scripture*, I need not say any more concerning it, but shall only consider some principal and common *objections* that are form'd against it.

It is objected, that nothing in the very terms can be a duty, which is an impossibility ; by the assistance of divine grace, we may perform every precept of the law, every duty acceptable to God, and therefore there seems no need of such a strict obedience to the law, but he that directs his behaviour according to the *best* of his intellectual and moral powers, will attain everlasting life.

Ans. THE impossibility of obtaining life, or being justified by the law, does not lie in this, that it requires what is unreasonable, or out of the reach of human agency, assisted by divine grace, but in our being drawn away by our own lust, and not continuing in those things, which consider'd one by one, are most fit to be requir'd of us ; this we find most surely true, that those very things we keep this hour, we break in the next ; in this case, tho' we may suppose the goodness of God will consider us, yet as one command of the law is not more out of our power, assisted by divine grace, or less reasonable to be required than another, the matter cannot be remedy'd by any allowance or abatement, unless the whole law is abated, which would be acting unreasonably, and giving license to sin, and therefore is absolutely unbecoming the *divine being* ; and I am persuaded, no man is able to lay down a more proper remedy in this case, than as the scriptures hath set forth, *i. e.* to provide a *propitiation*, and shew mercy consistent with the strictest justice, and vindication of the honour of the law. This argument then, that nothing can be expected from intelligent beings, but what is proportion'd to their several powers, will not here take place, because the deficiency of man, whereby he stands in need of a propitiation, may be sufficiently pleaded from his transgressing, and not continuing in those things which are within his power.

ANOTHER objection against this doctrine, is, that it is *needless*, for that God has a sovereign right to forgive sin, or to mitigate or abate the punishment, upon the sinners repentance and amendment, because he is the creator, governor, and possessor of all things.

Ans. THE sovereignty of God, considered without his justice, wisdom, and goodness, ought never to be assign'd as the rule or reason of his acting, because he never doth act so; and if it is right to conceive of God's sovereignty in such a manner as to make way for the wisdom and goodness of God in the point of *election* and *reprobation*, it is as right to conceive of God's sovereignty, so as to make way for justice in the point of *man's salvation by Christ*.

AGAIN it is objected, that to represent God as denying mercy to repentance and amendment, is to represent him as *strict* and *unrelenting*.

Ans. If we represented God as void of mercy, we should indeed represent him as strict and unrelenting, but this is not the case; it has been often told these *objectors*, that the *goodness* and *mercy* of God is not at all deny'd, and therefore is not the point in question: But the question is, wherein doth this *mercy* appear? and the scripture resolves it, by informing us that the same God against whom the offence is committed, was in Christ *reconciling* the world unto himself, finding out a way whereby he might be just as well as merciful, in not imputing our trespasses; this is not to represent God as strict and unrelenting, but righteous and merciful, and at the same time putting his mercy in its proper place, and this mercy freely held forth to sinners, is the most solid ground of repentance and amendment.

REPENTANCE and amendment, tho' it is in itself right and proper for all who are convinced they are, or have been in the wrong, yet it can by no means be look'd upon as a proper recompence or retaliation for that wrong; for as he that repents and amends, does no more than he ought to do, his repentance and amendment answers but for itself, and merits nothing.

FURTHER, the most ingenuous and genuine repentance and amendment, takes its rise, not only from being convinced we have been in the wrong, but also from a sense of the favour of God to us, in forgiving and blotting out our transgressions freely. It is therefore absolutely necessary, that the justice of God be manifested in punishing our sins in the person of Christ, and that the love and mercy of our God be manifested by his freely given and calling upon us to receive remission of sins in his blood, in order to form a proper ground of true repentance and amendment.

To this it is objected, that the sufferings of the innocent could not possibly be a satisfaction for the faults of the guilty, because as far as justice comes in the case, it requires the subjects in which the fault *is*, to be punished, and the contrary to this is manifestly unjust.

Ans. WHEN a crime is committed, what remains is not the action itself, but the evil consequences of the action, and the guilt or a debt to justice, contracted by that action, and it is no more unjust to take payment of this debt from another that did not contract it, but offers it voluntarily in the behalf of the contractor, then it would be in case of debt; and was not this admitted, no mercy could be

be shewn in such a case but with the loss of justice. It is true justice is not obliged to submit to mercy, nor mercy to justice, but as both these in God are accompanied with unerring wisdom, and this unerring wisdom has seen a fitness and propriety in administering mercy and forgiveness in a way of a *propitiation*, what has the erring wisdom of man to say against it?

It is objected, that if guilt be in the nature of a debt to be paid by another, it follows also, such a debt may be freely forgiven by the creditor.

Ans. 1. WHEN a common creditor forgives a debt, he in fact pays the debt himself, as verily as tho' he paid the debt for him to another, and therefore this is no contradiction to the case in hand.

2. I WOULD observe, that though we are oblig'd to speak thus after the manner of the relations we bear to one another, yet as man's reason falls infinitely short of measuring the incomprehensible wisdom of God; so do these relations *strictly* to measure the relation between God and his creatures; or to shew what the nature, evil tendency, and guilt of sin *fully* is, or what is the *fittest* propitiation for God to require in such a case; for tho' the relative character of *father, judge, preserver, &c.* may be look'd upon as helps to comprehend, in some measure, the relation God bears to us, yet not as any full description of it, and therefore many things may be affirm'd or deny'd, in regard to those relations, which cannot be affirm'd or deny'd, in respect of God's relation to us; and tho' the reality of the existence of the relations are very plain to us, and serve to shew us our obligations, yet any thing farther is incomprehensible by us, and there-

therefore stands as a solid reason against our limiting the divine proceedings in those matters, and for our submitting to such a description of them we have in his word.

AGAIN it is objected, that as it is by our misbehaviour we render ourselves personally displeasing to God, and are become the proper objects of his dislike or resentment, so by our repentance and amendment, we become the proper objects of his approbation and affection.

Ans. If sin was only like an error in a road, it would be fully at an end when the right path was taken; but the scripture sets it forth not only in that character, but also in the nature of a debt, of a disease, of a rebellion, all which description of it requires abundantly more than our repentance and amendment, to rectify the disorder brought in by it.

WHEN we speak of God's wrath, dislike, or resentment, we are properly to understand not merely a passion of anger and resentment, after the manner of men, but his justice, as above described, *viz.* a wise, good, holy, and just charge of sin, as a debt, upon those persons who have abused the end of their creation, in such and such respects; such persons, notwithstanding all the repentance and amendment possible to be conceived, can never thereby become the proper objects of his approbation and affection, in the eye of his justice, unless this repentance and amendment was *meritorious* enough to pay the debt and obtain discharge; and as to their being objects of his love, in any other respect God is unchangeably love in his *nature*. He is love, whether they repent or no, yea whether they are damned or saved.

THIS

THIS is plainly confirmed unto us in the scriptures, where we are told in one place, that the wrath of God abides on them that believe not ; and again in another place, that God *so loved* the world, that is the world of ungodly sinners, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life ; and when the *Jews* were given up to just wrath, our Saviour, at the same time is described as weeping over *Jerusalem*, shewing he loved them at the same time, tho' he saw their destruction just and necessary.

GOD cannot but be pleased with, and approve that his creatures should imitate and obey him, and act in every relation in such a manner as is evidently right, and consequently both for the good of themselves and others, and he cannot but be displeased with whatever is wrong and contrary ; and it becometh him to make a suitable difference in such cases, for if wickedness went unpunish'd, then God never signifies his disapprobation of it, and there remains no sufficient proof that he is displeased with it, nor that it is forbidden. Nevertheless, as to our persons, we are still the work of his hands, and are as much *in that respect* the proper objects of his approbation and affection, and as truly objects of his care, love, pity, &c. when we have acted in such a manner as he is displeased with, as we were before ; but as we are objects of his displeasure, by the just debt of our iniquitous dealings, we must remain objects of his displeasure in this sense, notwithstanding all repentance and amendment, until the debt is paid off and discharged, and this must either be by the punishment and destruction of the transgressors, or the substitution of another in our room. But that repentance and amendment, because it is a manner of acting

ing evidently right, and so far approveable, has therefore *merit* or *value* enough in it to justify or clear the persons who have by sinning abus'd the end of their creation, wants more proof than I believe the assertors of it can offer.

To this I would beg leave to add, what Mr. *William Law* says to the same objection; " He therefore
 " that says, *If sin be the cause of God's displeasure,*
 " *must not the ceasing from sin take away his displeasure?*
 " has just as much sense and reason on his side, as if
 " he had said, if a man's *murdering* of himself,
 " is the cause of God's displeasure, must not his re-
 " storing himself to life again, take away God's
 " displeasure. For there is as much foundation in
 " reason, and the nature of things, to affirm that
 " the soul of a *self-murderer* must have a sufficient
 " power to undo the effects of murder, and put
 " him in his former state, as to affirm, that *every*
 " *sinner* must have a sufficient natural power of un-
 " doing all the effects of sin, and putting himself
 " into the same state as if he had never sinned.

" This objection, therefore, against any *superna-*
 " *tural* means of attoning for sin, taken from the
 " *sufficiency* of our own repentance, is as *clear* and
 " *philosophical*, as that knowledge that is without
 " *any ideas*; and as justly to be rely'd upon, as
 " that *conclusion* which has no premises." *Case of*
Reason, p. 34, 35.

" WERE they to affirm, that *sinning angels* might
 " sufficiently regain their former perfection by a
 " *bare wish*, they would proceed as much accord-
 " ing to their knowledge of the nature of things,
 " as in affirming, that *sinful man* can *merit*
 " the pardon of his sins by his *own repentance*.
 " I say

“ I say *merit*, because they who hold repentance to be a sufficient title to pardon, can be no farther certain of it, than so far as they are certain that it *merits* it. And, according to this *Scheme*, the *penitent*, who thinks he has repented, need not beg of God to have compassion upon him, but *demand*s a due, which the *nature* of *things* gives him a right to claim.” p. 30. 31.

BUT to return, it is objected against the substitution of *Christ*, that what is personally pleasing in one agent, *i. e.* *Jesus Christ*, cannot possibly render another agent pleasing to God, because that the other does not thereby become the proper object of it.

Ans. So far as *Jesus* did what was personally pleasing in God's sight for us, in our name, room, and stead, as one pays a debt for another, if it is given to us as such, and received by us as such, it is as just for God to lay it to our account, and to give the just reward thereof, as tho' we had done it for ourselves; and as to our becoming the proper objects of his favour, or love, unless we are omniscient as God is, we are no proper judges who are such; but according to revelation, we see God is pleased to account his enemies, who are the proper objects of his wrath, at the same time, under another consideration, the proper objects also of his love, when we are told, that while we were yet sinners, ungodly, and without strength, *Christ* died for us, to reconcile our forgiveness to his justice, *not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins*, 1 John iii. 10.

BUT it is also objected, that if *Christ* hath suffered all the hell that is due to sin, and if it is inconsistent

sistent with the strictest justice to punish the same transgression twice, does not this prove, if it proves any thing, that all mankind are thereby exempted from punishment.

Ans. IF the end of suffering all the hell that is due to sin, was to release all mankind, whether they believ'd or no, the consequence is just; but if the end of *Christ* bearing all the hell that is due to sin, was to be a propitiation thro' *faith* in his blood, then it is as just, that he that believeth should be saved, and he that believeth not should be damned. For every one has a right to have any favour they confer, conferr'd in such a way as is agreeable to them; and this is more especially to be granted to him, who does always what is wisest and best.

AGAIN, as he that is paid, has no further right over his debtor, so justice being satisfy'd, as it stood in the way of love and mercy, has no further demand, but as he that pays a debt for another, has a right to release or retain the debtor as he pleases; so God having satisfy'd his own justice (as abovemention'd) by this propitiation, has, *consistent with all his perfections*, the right of forgiving sin, or imputing it, justifying, or condemning in his own hands. When a creditor has a mind to forgive his debtor, but yet for some reasons sees it necessary to take payment of the debt also, it is no absurdity for him to disburse the money in the behalf of the debtor, for the payment of himself, and after he has settled this account with himself, he has nevertheless the right of forgiving the debt when and how he pleases; so there is no absurdity in affirming the *divine being* had a demand on himself, when he in his love and mercy to sinners
seeing

seeing it not meet to release them without a full atonement and satisfaction, undertook to provide a satisfaction to his own justice, or a propitiation to declare his righteousness in the remission of sin, and having done this, he retains his right to forgive and justify as he sees fit. Thus God in Christ is become such a creditor, as is capable of remitting the debt in a way consistent with the full payment of it, and as he still retains the relation of a creditor, it is not inconsistent with the strictest justice to charge the debt upon, and punish all those, who do not by faith submit themselves unto the righteousness of God; as on the other hand, to those who have received the atonement, such conduct would be charging the debt twice. Thus *Christ* tasting death for every man, and suffering all the hell that is due to sin, reaches as far as it was intended; that is, not so far as to put sinners out of God's reach, but so far, as that God might thereby be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in *Jesus*; so far, as that remission of sins should be preach'd in his name to all nations, and every creature, according to the full meaning of that scripture, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16.

It is likewise objected, that making satisfaction implies damage being sustain'd by the party to whom satisfaction is made; in strictness of speech, the divinity cannot suffer any damage, and in that sense cannot want any satisfaction.

To this unchristian-like objection, I answer, the divinity is allow'd incapable of suffering any damage from *this* consideration, that he is absolutely independent and self-sufficient, and therefore as such,
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to support and vindicate himself and his perfections, will not suffer his moral perfections of justice, truth, &c. to be infringed upon by the actions of men; but this makes nothing at all for the *objector*, but, on the contrary, is a strong reason why the holy and just God reveals his wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, lest his moral character should suffer damage; it is also a sufficient reason why he continues that holy and just wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, (notwithstanding all pretended repentance and amendment) unto the entire destruction of the sinner, as to his well-being and happiness, or full satisfaction by a substitute, and thus maintains the character of a God that will by no means clear the guilty, lest his moral perfections should suffer damage.

ANOTHER objection is, that if God is of such a temper, as not to forgive or be reconcil'd upon repentance and humiliation, without another who was innocent, to take the guilt, and suffer the punishment, how is the divine veracity provided for: To say Christ is a representative, will never reconcile the affair, because then it is his representative-ship that is deem'd guilty, and his person which is allow'd to be innocent, suffers. This is a contradiction to the moral attributes of God.

Ans. It is not temper or humour in God, but his moral perfections that render repentance insufficient; the divine veracity which says, *curst is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*, is not at all provided for in the acceptance of repentance and amendment; it is also a perfection of his justice, that he will by no means clear the guilty. In
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this case there is no possibility for any one that has sinned to be saved, without a substitution of another is allow'd; and such a substitute, tho' his person, consider'd separate from his substitution, may be deem'd innocent, (as a person may, consider'd separate from his sins) yet his person consider'd as the substitute of the guilty, as having (as the objector terms it) *taken the guilt upon him*, in order to suffer the punishment, his person thus consider'd is no longer to be deem'd innocent, but chargeable with the crimes of those for whom he is substitute; thus it is not his substitution, or representativenesship that is deem'd guilty, and his person innocent, but his person is deem'd guilty, and suffers as such, because his person is the substitute of the guilty, and in this sense it is no more a contradiction to the moral attributes of God, that the innocent should by his appointment suffer for the guilty, than it is to the scripture, that *the just should suffer for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*.

As the end of punishment with God is not to gratify the passion of anger on the person that has offended, but to act according to his own perfections, reclaim the offender, and prevent the like evils: So if this end is answer'd, as well and better by substituting one in the sinner's stead, and *Christ* was voluntary in the matter, there is no inconsistency in such a substitution, but rather a manifestation of wisdom and goodness, &c. God in this respect acts as a wise and good government, administering both justice and mercy, not from humour, but with an eye to both, in such a manner, as is to the good of the whole, and his own glory. And as this substitution or taking the guilt upon him cannot be proved an inconsistency, so all arguments against the propitiation, in regard to *Christ's* innocence, much be reckon'd vain.

BUT

BUT it is farther objected, that for an innocent and good subject to be permitted to suffer in stead of a rebel, would be taking away a life useful and innocent, to preserve one noxious and guilty, and would be inverting instead of executing justice.

Ans. THIS case is not parallel with that of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who is no other than God manifest in flesh, tho' for us he took on him the form of a servant; and was as capable of taking up his life again, as he was of laying it down; but it should rather be consider'd as the taking away a life that could be recover'd again, to preserve from inevitable destruction a race of men, who should be to the praise and glory of his grace.

IT is also objected, that this doctrine cramps, if not entirely dissolves the very best foundations, principles, and basis of all true piety, *viz.* the fear of God, as a punisher of men's actions hereafter.

Ans. I THINK the fear of God, as a punisher of men's actions, is dissolved rather by the doctrine of God's mitigating or abating the punishment without a satisfaction. However, they must be very ignorant of a true principle of piety, who affirm, that fear which hath torment to be the best. The apostle *John* tells us, *we love him because he first loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

AGAIN it is objected, that God hath commanded us to exercise forgiveness without satisfaction to others, and is it not strange, he should not be able to act in this manner himself by his own creatures?

Ans. GOD's *ability* or *power* is not to be exalted against his other perfections, and what becomes
man,

man, as a creature, standing in need of mercy and forgiveness himself, is no rule to judge of God by, who always acts according to the perfections of his own nature, and therefore what would be noble and generous in us, may be unjust and unbecoming in him. And this argument must stand good till it can be proved that he acts in this case from no other reasons than we do.

LASTLY, it is objected, that what is wanting to fallen man, is an internal rectitude of mind, which can only be effected by an internal operation; that paying a debt, or making satisfaction, is not the thing, but working a change, and bringing the mind into order.

Ans. THAT rectitude of mind is not paying a debt, is very true, and therefore that man wants an internal rectitude of mind, does not at all disprove, but that he also stands in need of a satisfaction to divine justice, for the transgressions he is justly chargeable with; and a *true knowledge* of this reconciliation, thro' faith in *Christ*, produces that rectitude of mind we stand in need of.

UPON the whole, the arguments that have been offer'd amount to nothing, as they prove neither the impossibility nor contradiction of a propitiation; on the other hand, the scripture expressly testifies of it, and if we seriously consider, and look into the nature of things, we shall find that man's liableness to sin, and God's just anger against it, seems to render it necessary, (in order to their preservation from utter destruction) to appoint a propitiation for sin; for upon every sin, we must suppose just wrath and condemnation to ensue, and upon every sin, man being in a

worse estate than before, is less capable of standing, consequently they must fall continually lower and lower, further and further from God ; but by a propitiation, God's justice is vindicated in the remission of sin, and man is upheld by the ascertainment of God's favour to him, which favour being communicated by way of free gift, is a proper ground of repentance and amendment, and the most consistent and proper method of preserving man from utter ruin ; and moreover by such a display and happy participation of the divine perfections as we have by faith in *Christ*, we are not only restored to a true state of happiness, but also are hereby strengthened and influenced to live to his glory, whose love to our souls we are thus made sensible of. Thus, as I propos'd, I have given my FREE THOUGHTS on the subjects mention'd, and shall conclude with observing, that as they are of the greatest importance to us, so they ought to have our most serious consideration.

F I N I S.



*A LETTER inserted in the London
Courant, of Feb. 26. 1747.*

To the Author of the LONDON COURANT.

S I R,

I N compliance to Mr. *Finch's* request, I have perused his *remarks* inserted in this paper the 10th instant; and I apprehend him to be evidently mistaken in his first setting out, where he says, *That to allow that every divine command is highly fit and reasonable, is in fact to bring the bible to the bar of human judgment.*

If *human judgment* was able to comprehend all the reasons of *infinite wisdom*, it would be qualified to be a judge (of every divine command); but if, on the contrary, *human judgment* cannot discern the reasons of many things in *creation* and *providence*, it is most surely a very unfit judge of *God's revelation*; though I allow the scripture is never to be understood in such a sense, as is contradictory, or evidently contrary, to the *divine perfections*. *Revelation*, in the very term, implies ignorance in *those* to whom it is *sent*, it is because we are *ignorant*, we stand in need of *revelation*; so that in this case, if we pay a due regard to the fitness of things, we shall become learners rather than judges, and allow God to act according to reasons as much above our comprehension, as his wisdom is beyond ours; I believe the want of such a *reasonable allowance*, is in some measure the cause of so many disputes, which, as far as I can see, is no more an argument against the perspicuity of the *bible*, than it is against the perspicuity of *right* and *wrong*, *virtue* and *vice*.

Mr. *Finch's* reflections of *February 3d*, being so foreign to what I inserted *January* the *30th*, I beg leave to remind him of the substance of it again: Having advanced *January* the *23d*, That he that directed his *behaviour*, both towards God and man, according to the *best* of his *intellectual* and *moral powers*, would, on *his principles*, attain *everlasting life*. I took the liberty to let him know, that he was amusing *himself* and the *publick*, with notions of *such men* as there is *not*; because all men are *sinners*, i. e. have acted *otherwise*, and consequently are incapable of *salvation* upon *his principles*. I further observ'd, that if he recurred to *repentance* and *amendment*, as a sufficient remedy in this case, without a *propitiation for sin*, he must attempt the *proof* of it by *scripture* or *reason*; if by *scripture* he confutes himself, because that says, *Christ bare our sins*, and *we are justified by his blood*: If by *reason*, he will do *more* than any have done before him: And in respect to this, if Mr. *Finch* has done more than *merely supposed* the matter, I would desire him to cite the *page*, for I really cannot find it. But allowing that it could be proved, that God would forgive upon *repentance* and *amendment*, without a *propitiation for sin*, still *salvation* is impossible, upon Mr. *Finch's Principles*, which is not that *repentant sinners* will be *saved*, but, that they who do their *best*, according to their *intellectual*, and *moral powers*, and, consequently, are no sinners at all: I hope then, as I have reduced his doctrine of *salvation* to a real impossibility, he will ingenuously acknowledge it; and then the *publick* will have a proof, that he *desires* (as he professes) *always to have an ear open to instruction*, and to esteem that person his friend, who endeavours by sound argument to convince him of his errors. What I proposed shortly to publish, was not an engagement with Mr. *Finch*,
but

but *free thoughts* upon the subject. I think I have done my part with him *already*; I thank him for his care, lest I should be inconsistent with myself, and would remove it by assuring him, that I hold neither the doctrine of *election*, nor the *fall of man*, in such a manner as sets forth the *divine being* as acting from *mere sovereign pleasure*, or *arbitrary will*, i. e. *will*, without infinite wisdom and goodness conjoin'd.

WILLIAM CUDWORTH.

Mr. *Finch*, in answer to this letter, asserts, *First*, That I have condemn'd his rule of judging of *divine revelation*, and set up one for myself that is precisely the same; because I allow the scripture is never to be understood in such a sense, as is contradictory, or evidently contrary to the *divine perfections*: I don't see yet, that this is *precisely* the same with asserting, that *human judgment* is qualify'd to be a judge of the fitness and reasonableness of *every divine command*; for tho' our measure of reason qualifies us for rejecting *such conceptions* of the *divine being* as is unworthy of him, yet it does not qualify us to judge of the fitness and reasonableness of *every divine command*. No body denies, but man may know some reasons of some commands, but unless all the reasons of every divine command were fully known, I don't think it is proper to talk of bringing the *bible* to the bar of *human judgment*.

IN the *second* place, Mr. *Finch* accuses me of giving *that* out to the world as the *whole* of his principles, in regard to attaining *salvation*, which was only a part of them, and now adds, *repentance* and *amendment* as another way of salvation in case we err. I did not concern myself about the whole of his principles, but only spake of what he had advanced

vanc'd in the publick papers, and I think Mr. *Finch* has given it up, by his going about to prove that all men are not sinners, for I think no doctrine can be more evident by scripture and experience than that all men are sinners ; I think he might as well go about to prove that all men are not mortal.

WHETHER it is fit for God to forgive upon repentance and amendment, we are not able to demonstrate, nor even to prove so much as probable by our reason ; for we are only to be judges of the fitness of a thing, when we know all the reasons that might be offer'd in the case on one side or the other, as long as we see but part of the reasons of a thing, it is impossible we should be able to judge on which side the greater weight of reason lies ; therefore as there are innumerable reasons of which we know nothing, it is possible, that God be both wise, just, and good, tho' he should not do what we may fancy he probably will do ; there is a necessity therefore of being beholden to revelation, in this respect, and revelation maintains in the plainest and strongest terms, *Christ as the only propitiation for sin*, and declares, that we have forgiveness and redemption in his blood.

MR. *Finch* says, that this doctrine is easily reducible to an absolute contradiction. — How well Mr. *Finch* has done this, I appeal to the publick, in the perusal of my *free thoughts*, which he acknowledges, p. 16. contains his arguments, put by me into the form of *objections*, and what he has offer'd since, I have answer'd in this *second edition*.

I know not what Mr. *Finch* means by casting a slur upon the bible as an *outward revelation*, that has journey'd thro' a multiplicity and variety of hands, some none of the best, &c. but I look upon them as the mind of God, who cannot deceive ; and I think there are as sufficient proofs of this, as the nature of the thing will possibly admit. The multiplicity of disputes, and religious opposition, has I believe been a great means of prevention of such adulteration as is *insinuated* ; because one party has always taken care to prevent another party's doing it without detection.

IF Mr. *Finch* can prove any such adulteration as he insinuates, he will do a piece of service to the world in making it
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it known, if not, he may as well be quiet, as trouble people with *his suppositions*.

THAT men may with much less study and enquiry agree in the fundamental rules and maxims on which *moral virtue* proceeds, than they can in the doctrines of the *bible* is true, for this reason: The rules and maxims on which *moral virtue* proceeds, is the dictates of the *light of nature* in every man, so that if there was no *bible*, these things could be known and assented to. But the *main design* of the *bible* is to shew unto us the *way of salvation*, which is what the light of nature does not reach unto. The doctrines of the bible are not contrary to the light of nature, yet several of them are not discoverable by that light; but are such truths as must in the nature of them be convey'd to the mind by revelation, and be received wholly by faith, reason being no further concern'd, than to see sufficient ground to receive such *revelation*.

As my *aim* is to come at, and vindicate the *truth*, I pass by all such little personal reflections, with which Mr. *Finch's* writing abounds.—That I advance only where I am certain, is a character I'm not ashamed of, and therefore I would not have him be so displeas'd, that I don't advance such absurdities as he finds himself capable of detecting.

MR. *Finch* has misrepresented me in several parts of his *book*, I will instance one, and leave the rest to be discover'd by a perusal of *this second edition*.—He begins, p. 18, 19, with representing me as tho' I had asserted the divine being over-ruling *human agency* in preservation (as he terms it) of his own darling plan, *so as to apply to his immediate direction and approbation, events the most vile and infamous*. My words are, That 'as God purpos'd to endow man 'with the liberty above-mention'd, he has also purpos'd to 'govern his creature man, and over-rule those evils which 'he perceiv'd would arise from the *wrong use of their liberty*, in such a manner, as should be best upon the whole, 'most for the good of the creature, and for his own glory.' Surely there is a wide difference between over-ruling those evils for good, which arise from the wrong use of human agency, and over-ruling human agency itself, as above described.

scrib'd. The *candour* and *ingenuity* of Mr. *Finch*, in this matter, I leave to the judgment of the publick.

It is to no purpose to run from one thing to another, I expect Mr. *Finch* to keep to the point in hand, or say nothing, or make an acknowledgment. I expect him to prove that all men are not sinners ; his attempt hitherto has amounted to no more than this, that God is merciful, and will consider us, and that the intellectual and moral powers of man are disparate or unequal.—Let the intellectual and moral powers of man be how they will, still it lies upon Mr. *Finch* to prove, that the men of this world have acted according to the best of that *measure* of intellectual and moral powers that have been allotted them, before he can clear himself of the charge of amusing himself and the publick, with notions of such men as there is not, or such methods of salvation, as there is no proper subjects for in this world. What man is there, whose heart does not condemn him of acting, not by necessity, but freely against what he was conscious to himself was the mind and will of God. That God is merciful to us is allow'd, but that it is fit for God to extend this mercy to us, without a propitiation, to declare his *righteousness* and *justice* at the same time, is a point that Mr. *Finch*, nor any mortal else, has reason enough to determine ; and since the revelation of God has declared the contrary, this is what we ought to abide by.



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